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63rd Department of the Interior Honors Convocation Features Awards for Bravery, Cooperative Conservation and Distinguished Service

WASHINGTON DC— Acting Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett led today's 63rd Department of the Interior Honor Awards Convocation at which 55 awards were presented to Department of the Interior employees and volunteers for distinguished service, cooperative conservation projects, bravery and valor.

"I'm honored and privileged to recognize the many men and women who have served the Department with acts of courage and valor this year, as well as those who have served the American public with excellence for many years," Acting Secretary Scarlett said at the event in the Sidney Yates Auditorium of the Main Interior Building.

"These individuals come from a broad range of Interior agencies. They include park rangers and firefighters, geologists and information managers," she noted. "Today we also honor private citizens who heard the call of duty. They embody the concept of cooperative conservation and partnership. Regardless of where or how they serve, all of today's awardees have inspired us with their service."

Cooperative Conservation Awards

Today's cooperative conservation awards recognized cooperative conservation achievements that have involved collaborative activity among a diverse range of entities including federal, state, local and tribal governments, private for profit and nonprofit institutions, other nongovernmental entities and individuals. The awardees include:

Bahia Grande Restoration Partnership nominated by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Through the collaborative efforts of more than 55 organizations and individuals, a major milestone was achieved in July 2005, when a constructed pilot channel reflooded approximately 6,500 acres of the Bahia Grande Unit of the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. Fish and wildlife immediately started to return to the flooded basin.

Cathlapotle Plankhouse Project Steering Committee nominated by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Through a cooperative, community-based effort, a full-sized traditional Chinookan-style cedar plankhouse was constructed on the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge in Washington. The plankhouse serves as a center for hands-on environmental and heritage education

Deep Wrecks Project nominated by Minerals Management Service

This remarkable collaboration of federal agencies, private companies and universities conducts archaeological, historical, and biological research investigation of six ships that were sunk by Hitler's U-boat activities during World War II in the Gulf of Mexico.

Ken Delano nominated by Bureau of Reclamation.

As manager of the Grant Soil and Water Conservation District in Oregon since 1982, Ken Delano is a significant leader in the John Day Basin (eastern Oregon). Delano has forged many working partnerships that have resulted in a variety of watershed and stream restoration and conservation measures. Accomplishments from 1985 to 2004 include 160 miles of riparian fencing and 60 push up dams removed or replaced. In 2005, the District completed a series of projects on the South Fork John Day River.

Arthur Kitchen nominated by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Kitchen's collaborative approach to the removal of a dam on private property-- and the resulting addition of 25 miles of trout and salmon habitat--embodies the intent and spirit of cooperative conservation. Balancing the interests of a host of diverse stakeholders and more than a dozen private and public partners, Kitchen gained local support and funding to implement the dam removal.

Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge nominated by National Park Service

By acquiring and restoring a 750-acre brownfield site along the Kittatinny Ridge, a migratory corridor for raptors and songbirds, the nonprofit Wildlife Information Center is creating the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge. In partnership, the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Commission has provided expertise and backing to secure land acquisition and funding, and led the design of the refuge master site plan.

Mackay Mine Hill Project nominated by Bureau of Land Management

A partnership of the White Knob Historical Preservation Committee and the Mackay Mine Hill Team has preserved a valuable piece of Idaho's historic past. The project has been successful in restoring the Shay train trestle and the ten remaining tram towers that once transported the ore to the valley and in installing a system of interpretive signs at major points of interest on the hill.

Maine Atlantic Salmon Conservation Partnership nominated by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Established in Oct. 2000, the Maine Atlantic Salmon Conservation Partnership's accomplishments include in-stream and riverine restoration, habitat protection, watershed management, and applied research to enhance salmon conservation efforts. Since 2000, more than 100 Atlantic salmon recovery projects have been implemented, more than 54,000 acres of riparian habitat have been permanently protected, and access to more than 25 miles of historic Atlantic salmon habitat has been restored.

Bridget Nielsen nominated by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Through her initiative and tenacity, Nielsen has created a successful FWS conservation partnership program in Nevada. Nielsen's work has resulted in partnership successes including: the purchase of Dave's Island Pasture to protect 3,300 acres of bull trout habitat, working with the Duckwater Tribe to restore all Railroad Valley springfish critical habitat on their lands and developing Nevada's first Safe Harbor Agreement to reintroduce endangered White River spinedace.

Partnership for the National Trails System nominated by National Park Service

The Partnership has drawn all 22 of the nonprofit organizations that work to support America's national trails into its affiliate membership. In 2005, the partnership contributed more than 690,000 volunteer hours, fostered dozens of community-based conservation projects along the trails, collaborated on 42,000 miles of trail, raised millions of dollars to protect trail corridor lands and established effective communications networks, training, and events to foster cooperative conservation.

Storm Response Team Leads nominated by U.S. Geological Survey

The Storm Response Team, a partnership of the USGS, NPS, and FWS, was formed to integrate and coordinate storm response activities in relation to tropical storms and hurricanes threatening the entire eastern United States and Caribbean and Gulf coastal areas. The Team Leads managed clear coordination, communication, and sharing of resources and data among the bureaus both during and following major storm events.

Michael D. Stuver, Fredrick S. Liljegren, Larry Rupp, Roger Kjelgren, and Kelly Kopp nominated by Bureau of Reclamation

These individuals from the Bureau of Reclamation and Utah State University have been researching water conservation techniques in the urban landscape, forming the nonprofit Utah Water Conservation Forum to carry out that work. They studied turf grass, the largest irrigated crop in the United States to specify its water requirements. This led to the design of "Catch Cups" to measure how evenly water is being applied to a landscape.

Marc J. Taylor nominated by U.S. Geological Survey Dr. Taylor founded the Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition to protect the quality and quantity of water in the basin through the combined efforts of those who have an interest in the watershed. Instrumental in pulling together national, state and local resources, Dr. Taylor created a water-management plan that will serve as a model for other watershed organizations throughout the region and the nation.

Distinguished Service Awards

The Distinguished Service Award is the highest honorary recognition an employee can receive within the Department of the Interior. It is granted for an outstanding contribution to science, outstanding skill or ability in the performance of duty, outstanding contribution made during an eminent career in the Department or any other exceptional contribution to public service. Recipients receive a special certificate and citation signed by the Secretary along with an engraved gold Distinguished Service medal and a gold lapel pin. Today's recipients follow.

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Wayne C. Nordwall

Bureau of Land Management

Kathy J. Eaton

Bureau of Reclamation

Kenneth R. Pedde*

Minerals Management Service

J. Michael Melancon John L. Rodi

National Business Center

Richard H. Koebert Susan E. Leonard Dennis R. Locke

National Park Service

Wayne G. Brewster Richard Martin

Office of the Secretary

J. Ronald Johnston*

Office of the Solicitor

Richard K. Aldrich

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Marshall P. Jones, Jr.

U.S. Geological Survey

Charles G. Cunningham

William E. Fordyce

Catherine L. Hill

Douglas H. Johnson

P. Patrick Leahy

George H. Leavesley

Myung W. Lee

Timothy L. Miller

Kenneth J. Osborn**

Waverly J. Person

Charlene Hall Raphael

J. Michael Scott

Wayne R. Thatcher

James R. Winton

*Awards previously presented

**Award received posthumously and previously presented to family

Citizen's Award for Bravery

The Citizen's Award for Bravery is granted to private citizens for heroic acts or unusual bravery in the face of danger. Recipients have risked their lives to save the life of a Departmental employee or the life of another person on property owned by or entrusted to the Department of the Interior. A special certificate and citation signed by the Secretary is presented to each recipient.

Edward D. Marsette is this year's recipient in recognition of his willingness to place himself at great personal risk in order to save the lives of three others.

On Wednesday, March 15, 2006, at 1:00 a.m., a vehicle occupied by six Muckleshoot Tribal members traveling on the Auburn/Enumclaw Highway in the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation flipped, crashed into a utility pole, and caught on fire. Without regard for his personal safety, Marsette, a member of the Chippewa Cree tribe, plunged fifteen feet down a steep embankment above the site toward the highway to help the victims. Selflessly, Mr. Marsette repeatedly reached into the burning vehicle to assist the occupants, receiving burns to his hands, legs, and forearms. Mr. Marsette was able to pull three of the five passengers trapped in the vehicle to safety.

Valor Awards

The Valor Award is presented to Department of the Interior employees who have demonstrated unusual courage involving a high degree of personal risk in the face of danger. The act of heroism is not required to be related to official duties or to have occurred at the official duty station. Recipients receive a citation signed by the Secretary and an engraved gold Valor Award Medal.

Valor Award Recipients

Bureau of Reclamation

Russell W. Balbirona

Jeffrey A. Stone

Andre' K. Leamons

Dennis L. Schuenemann

Bureau of Land Management

James T. Wood

National Park Service

Jason P. Bauwens

Rob Pilewski

Kevin D. Hammonds

Oliver S. Johnson

Irvin Brad McDougal

Roger W. Myers

Kenneth L. Thompson

Ryan R. Regnell

Matthew E. Stokely

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